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Directorate of Intelligence

Recent Mining Incidents in the Northern Persian Gulf

1. Between 17 May and 9 June, three tankers engaged in trade with Kuwait sustained severe underwater hull damage most likely attributable to striking moored contact mines. The Kuwaiti-chartered, Soviet-flag tanker "Marshal Chuykov," the Liberian-flag tanker "Primrose," and the Greek tanker "Ethnic," were damaged within less than a mile of each other, all in the Mina Al-Ahmadi deep water entrance channel to Kuwait.

2. Iran has a demonstrated capability for conducting mine warfare operations, and probably has between 300 and 500 naval mines in its inventory. The maximum depth of the Mina Al-Ahmadi channel is approximately 90 feet (30 meters), and there is less than one nautical mile separation between the buoys marking the channel. Small moored contact mines, with explosive charges of some 400-600 pounds, could have been laid by marine commando or Revolutionary Guard units at night using fast patrol boats.

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